

Family History and Your Health

Spring is here! And along with it
allergy season.....



May is Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month



Asthma is a lifelong (chronic) breathing problem. It is caused by swelling of the airways in reaction to various substances in the environment called stimuli or triggers. The symptoms can vary from coughing to wheezing and having difficulty breathing. Asthma, left untreated or not treated properly, may even cause death.

One in every 15 Michigan children attending school is affected with asthma, and it is the leading cause of missed school days. Asthma rates in Michigan adults are slightly higher than in the U.S. By identifying children at risk for developing asthma and educating both adults and children about prevention and warning signs, complications related to asthma can be reduced.

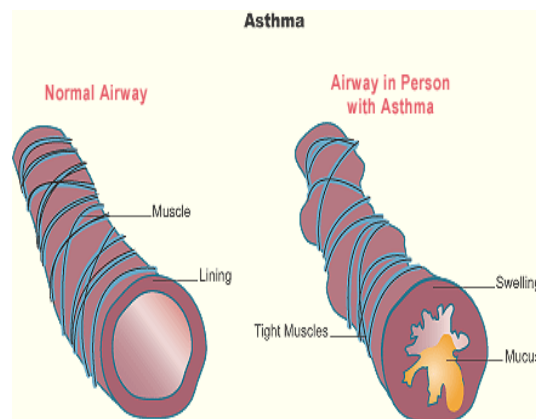
Family History and Asthma

There are many risk factors to consider when determining someone's risk for asthma. However, one risk factor is often overlooked—the family health history. Although no single “asthma gene” has yet been identified, family history is still an important tool. It is thought that a person's susceptibility to asthma may be due to many genes interacting together as well as with the environment. Studies have shown:

- ◆ Over half of children who are diagnosed with asthma have a family history of asthma
- ◆ A person's risk of developing asthma is higher if he/she has a parent and sibling with asthma

Triggers or stimuli in our environment that can cause symptoms of asthma include:

- ◆ Tobacco Smoke
- ◆ Dust and dust mites
- ◆ Chemical odors
- ◆ Pet dander
- ◆ Cold air
- ◆ Other particles found outside
- ◆ Termites



National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

Your trachea (or windpipe) divides into two “tubes” that go into the lungs where they branch out even more into the brachial “tree”. This is where oxygen is taken into the body. In someone with asthma, the linings of these tubes swell making it difficult for the lungs to take in air.

Family Health History

1. Talk about it
2. Write it down
3. Pass it on!

For more information, please contact the Public Health Genomics Program by
e-mail: genetics@michigan.gov or call toll-free: 1-866-852-1247

Healthy Homes are a Family Affair!

Healthy Homes University is a federally funded Michigan program working to provide help for families and children with asthma or allergies. The program is for low to moderate income families living in Ingham County who have children less than 18 years old with asthma or allergy symptoms. Eligible families will receive free intervention products to reduce asthma triggers and prevent injuries. The goal of Healthy Homes is to identify 300 families to receive a wide variety of services.

If you would like to receive information or fill out an application please visit the Healthy Homes website at www.michigan.gov/leadsafe or call Linda Stewart at (517)335-8867.



Asthma and Schools

For those who have a child with asthma, please note that in March 2000, Michigan passed a law allowing children with asthma to carry an inhaler with them in school. This makes access to their inhaler easier during emergency situations and prior to physical activities. In order to carry an inhaler, three conditions must be met:

- ◆ The student must have written permission to use the inhaler from a physician or health care provider
- ◆ If the student is under the age of 18, he/she must also have permission from a parent or legal guardian to carry his/her inhaler
- ◆ The principal or chief administrator must receive a copy of each written approval for the student.

This law only applies if the school or district does not have any policy to the contrary, so check with your child's school. Be your child's advocate to make school safe and fun for all!

On the Web...

Michigan Department of Community Health-
Lead Program and Healthy Homes University
www.michigan.gov/leadsafe

Asthma Initiative of Michigan (AIM)
www.getastmahelp.org

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America-
Michigan Chapter
www.aafamich.org

Asthma and Schools
www.asthmaandschools.org

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute- Asthma page
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/index.htm

Asthma Genomics: A Public Health Perspective
www.cdc.gov/genomics/training/perspectives/asthma.htm

May 31
World NO Tobacco Day

"World No Tobacco Day" is the only global event established to call attention to the impact of tobacco on health and reduce the use of tobacco. The American Cancer Society estimates that approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of cancer related deaths in 2005 were caused by tobacco use alone. Secondhand smoke (or Environmental Tobacco Smoke -ETS) also poses health risks, especially to children. Studies have shown an increase in cases of asthma and ear infections due to ETS. For information on quit kits go to www.michigan.gov/mdch and click on prevention, or call 1-800-480-7848.

